

Base chapel provides backbone for community-based programs, spirituality

**By Airman 1st Class
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Public Affairs

Every unit on Rhein-Main has a significant mission and purpose. The Base Chapel has one of the most unique missions, in that it is geared more toward service to the entire community.

The mission statement of the chapel is "Implement policy and plans and develop programs that promote spiritual wholeness."

Through a wide variety of programs including daily mass, religious education, youth groups, and charitable events, the chapel advances spirituality in the Rhein-Main community.

The chapel staff is made up of five active-duty members, and a number of civilians. Like most units on Rhein-Main, the chapel staff is one-deep at each position. Thus, if a member goes TDY or on leave, the other staff members must find a way to cover the duties.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Dennis Kitterman, installation chaplain, said it is difficult to pick up others' duties, but the existing staff, with the help of volunteers make it possible.

While being a part of the chapel is a positive experience, there are aspects of the mission that can be difficult for the staff.

"The most challenging thing is that we are a chapel, not a church community," said Barbara Swingle, the Protestant religious education coordinator.

The rules under which the chapel operates are sometimes difficult for some people to adjust to, Swingle said.

"Being a chapel, we accommodate all religious beliefs," she said. This means that certain religious symbols can't be displayed in parts of the chapel, and the workings of

the chapel may not be what some people expect, she added. Trying to oblige everyone is not an easy task.

"We have to be neutral," said Staff Sgt. Cynthia Williams, chapel noncommissioned officer in charge.

The restrictions that come with this neu-

that we minister to," said Chaplain, (Capt.) Dwayne W. Keener, Protestant chaplain

"We give a lot of attention to the contingency dorms," said Keener. "Particularly during this time of year, when folks are going down range during the holidays. We help them to adjust being away from family."

The chapel is also involved with a large number of committees on base.

"I think one of the things people might not realize is that we are involved in a lot of different aspects of this base," Kitterman said.

The chapel has representatives in everything from the School Advisory Council to the Safety Council. "Everything that meets, we are usually a part of it," he added. "We have a wide reach of involvement."

This involvement extends to the Gateway Gardens housing area. Kitterman said that since Gateway Gardens is where a majority of base personnel live, it is important for the chapel to have a strong presence there.

"Every active-duty chapel staff lives in Gateway Gardens," he said. "We are embedded in the community."

Being "embedded in the community" allows the staff the best opportunity to be available when others are in need.

And after all, "That's what it's all about, helping people," said Williams.

One thing that chaplain Kitterman wants people to remember is that he and the other chaplains all wear the same uniform other servicemembers do -- that they too, are servicemembers.

"Chaplains are ministers, but we are also military members," Kitterman explained.



File photo by Master Sgt. Stefan Alford

The base Chapel offers a variety of religious programs.

trality are hard for some parishoners who are used to doing things a certain way, Swingle said. It is up to the chapel staff to help them adjust.

Unlike many organizations on base that are responsible for specific areas, the chapel's mission extends over the broadest of areas.

"In addition to the 469th, we have the tenant units and those who are in transit

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